

## Chapter 3: Finding Connection Amid Silence

As he speaks, he hopes his words provide Felix with some reassurance—a feeling that he belongs, that he is not as alone as he may think. Chapter 3 unfolds with a moment of quiet vulnerability as he says gently, "I know it might seem impossible right now," trying to keep his voice steady despite the lingering uncertainty in his own heart. "But one day, you'll meet people who truly see you, who understand and accept you, no matter how much you feel like an outsider now." His words carry weight, a quiet plea for Felix to believe in something he himself once struggled to accept. He hesitates, feeling the vulnerability of his own admission, but he refuses to look away. "Just wait," he adds with a sense of quiet conviction. "I promise you will find your people, and when that happens, everything will change."

He waits for some sort of acknowledgment—an indication that his words have landed, that Felix has at least considered them. But Felix simply looks at him, his expression neutral, his emotions impossible to read. Instead of responding, he reaches down, picks up his calculator, and gestures toward the next problem on the page, as if the moment had never happened. There's a flicker of disappointment, a familiar ache of wondering if his attempt at connection had failed. But then, he reminds himself that not all words take root immediately. Sometimes, their impact lingers beneath the surface, waiting for the right moment to bloom. He exhales and shifts his attention back to their work, allowing the steady rhythm of conjugating verbs and solving equations to fill the space between them.

Despite the silence that follows, he can't help but feel that something has shifted, however imperceptibly. Maybe Felix isn't ready to hear those words right now, but that doesn't mean they won't stay with him. He knows from experience that sometimes, reassurance doesn't register in the moment—it settles in later, surfacing in unexpected ways, at times when it's needed most. He hopes that someday, when Felix is standing at a crossroads, feeling isolated or misunderstood, this conversation will come back to him like an echo, a quiet reminder that someone once saw him and believed in his future.

As they continue working, he finds himself reflecting on the nature of connection, how often it feels like throwing messages into the wind, never quite knowing where they will land. Not every act of kindness is acknowledged, and not every piece of advice is immediately absorbed. But that doesn't make them any less meaningful. Sometimes, all you can do is plant a seed of hope and trust that it will grow in its own time.

Later, as they close their books and begin gathering their things, he steals a final glance at Felix, searching for any indication that his words have made a difference. There's nothing obvious—no change in his expression, no shift in his demeanor. But something unspoken lingers in the air between them, something heavier than the mere exchange of words. Perhaps Felix will never say anything about it. Perhaps he won't even consciously remember this conversation. But deep down, he hopes that someday, when Felix least expects it, he'll realize that he isn't alone—that he has a place, that he is wanted, that there are people out there who will care for him in ways he never thought possible.

And maybe, just maybe, one day Felix will pass along that same reassurance to someone else. He will find someone who reminds him of himself, someone struggling with the same doubts and fears, and he will repeat these words—words he once received in silence but carried with him nonetheless. This is how understanding spreads, how kindness endures, how hope finds a way to survive even in the darkest of places. He smiles faintly to himself as he steps away, knowing that even if he never sees it happen, this conversation was worth having.

The room grows quiet as they part ways, but the moment lingers—existing in the space between what was spoken and what was left unsaid. And in the end, that's often how change begins: not in grand gestures or immediate transformations, but in the slow, unseen process of words settling into someone's heart, waiting for the right moment to shape the future.